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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5791
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 0584
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 4237
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 SEOUL 000626

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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; April 16, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo, All TVs
ROK Delays Entry into PSI

JoongAng Ilbo
Economy Has Not Bottomed Out Despite Signs of Recovery

Dong-a Ilbo, Hankook Ilbo, Segye Ilbo,
Seoul Shinmun, All TVs
ROK Releases Results of College Entrance Exam for the First Time,
Showing Wide Performance Gap

Hankyoreh Shinmun
Economy Not in Recovery Despite Some Positive Indicators

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

On April 15, the ROKG delayed the official announcement of its full-time membership in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) until the weekend. Observers say that the ROKG was concerned with the adverse effects its announcement might have on inter-Korean relations. (All, All TVs)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

On April 15, North Korea ordered international nuclear inspectors to remove their surveillance equipment and leave the country. This move came a day after North Korea vowed to restart its nuclear program in response to the UNSC presidential statement condemning its rocket launch. (All, All TVs)

In a related development, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called the North's action "an unnecessary response to the legitimate statement" by the Security Council. (Chosun, Hankyoreh, Hankook, Segye, All TVs). She added that "obviously we hope that there will be an opportunity to discuss this with not only our partners and allies but also eventually with the North Koreans." (Dong-a, Segye)

Also, U.S. Presidential Spokesman Robert Gibbs said that the U.S. calls on North Korea "to cease its provocative threats, to respect the will of the international community and to honor its international commitments and obligations." (Chosun, Dong-a, Hankook, Seoul, Segye)

According to the Japanese Yomiuri Shimbun, the U.S. has put 11 North Korean companies on its sanctions list, and will present the list to the UNSC. (Seoul)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-North Korea

ROK media ran front- and inside-page reports that North Korea ordered international nuclear inspectors to remove their surveillance equipment and leave the country. Citing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Conservative Chosun Ilbo reported that North Korea claimed to be restarting its nuclear facilities. Chosun Ilbo notes that this brinkmanship tactic by North Korea is aimed at testing the patience of the Obama Administration by escalating tensions. According to the newspaper, experts believe that North Korea will not reprocess its spent fuel rods as it declared since this would mean a complete demise in the disablement process. Experts observe that (before North Korea takes serious actions), there is a high possibility that a U.S. high-ranking envoy will visit North Korea, according to the

SEOUL 00000626 002 OF 004

newspaper.

In a related development, ROK media also covered remarks by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stating that the North's action is "an unnecessary response to the legitimate statement" by the (UN) Security Council. Also, the ROK media carried remarks by U.S. Presidential Spokesman Robert Gibbs stating that the U.S. calls on North Korea "to cease its provocative threats, to respect the will of the international community and to honor its international commitments and obligations."

All ROK media reported that the ROKG delayed the official announcement of its full-time membership in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) until the weekend. Moderate Hankook Ilbo reported that observers believe that the ROKG was concerned with the adverse effects its announcement might have on inter-Korean relations. According to the newspaper, a North Korean expert said the ROKG's delayed announcement (of its full PSI participation) could be seen as an admission by the ROK that the move targets North Korea. The newspaper commented that this perception could result in less maneuvering room for the ROKG.

Meanwhile, left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun reported that there are concerns that the ROK's full participation in the PSI may prompt North Korea to block ROK workers from freely moving in and out of the Kaesong Industrial Complex or to even shut down the Complex. The newspaper noted that closing the Complex would spark criticism from Koreans that the ROKG is inept in managing a crisis.

Conservative Dong-a Ilbo editorialized: "It is natural that the ROK should fully participate in the PSI as a responsible member of the international community to protect the global village from terrorist countries and organizations. The PSI is not targeting only North Korea, but it is an international cooperation system aimed at assuring the security and peace of the global village... North Korea rails against the ROK's full participation in the PSI, saying it is a declaration of war... Unless North Korea intends to spread weapons of mass destruction (WMD), it has no reason to oppose the ROK's becoming a full-fledged member of the PSI."

Conservative Segye Ilbo editorialized: "North Korea's threat to construe the ROK's (full) participation in the PSI as a declaration of war could have forced the ROK to back off... Inter-Korean relations are surely important, but the ROKG should not repeatedly

succumb to North Korea's outdated brinkmanship tactics. Peace and unification of the Korean Peninsula will unlikely be achieved without cooperation from the international community, as seen in the unification of East and West Germany. The ROK's full participation in the PSI could be a starting point in this shift in understanding."

OPINIONS/EDITORIALS

NO GROUND FOR OPPOSING PSI
(Dong-a Ilbo, April 16, 2009, Page 31)

The ROKG delayed the announcement of its full participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) yesterday. It is regrettable that the ROKG appears to be backing off just one day after the North's ultra-hardline announcement that it will boycott the Six-Party Talks and restore the nuclear facilities to their original state, in response to the UNSC presidential statement condemning its rocket launch. If it is true that the ROKG postponed the announcement for just a couple of days as it claims, the ROKG should reaffirm its decision to join international efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), as soon as it resolves some variables in inter-Korean relations and consults with neighboring countries.

It is natural that the ROK should fully participate in the PSI as a responsible member of the international community to protect the

SEOUL 00000626 003 OF 004

global village from terrorist countries and organizations. The PSI is not targeting only North Korea, but is an international cooperation system aimed at assuring the security and peace of the global village.

The PSI is like a system in which police block the transfer of lethal weapons through patrolling the streets to prevent crime. Considering that 94 nations have already joined the PSI, our participation seems to be a little late. Over the past six years, about 30 shipments suspected of carrying WMD-related materials have been intercepted due to the PSI. We need to face the reality that as shown by ROK casualties in Yemen and Afghanistan, we are no exception to international terrorism.

North Korea rails against the ROK's full participation in the PSI, saying it is a declaration of war." This action is similar to a thief warning police not to stand in his way. Unless the North intends to spread WMs, it has no reason to oppose the ROK's becoming a full-fledged member of the PSI. When Russia joined the PSI, North Korea did not raise an objection. North Korea makes an issue of the South's participation in the PSI because the North considers us to be pushovers.

When the North announced that it will quit the Six-Party Talks on April 14, the Democratic Party asked the ROKG to refrain from fully join the PSI, saying, "It could provoke the North and further increase the possibility of military conflict." The Democratic Labor Party is also making a similar argument. This argument is similar to defending a thief while criticizing the police for patrolling. It is North Korea that has recently brought inter-Korean relations to their worst state by launching a rocket and boycotting the Six-Party Talks.

Even if North Korean vessels or airplanes transport WMD-related cargo, we cannot intervene unless they pass through our territorial waters or sky. Nevertheless, if the North uses the ROK's participation in the PSI as an excuse to make another provocative move, we have no choice but to take stringent countermeasures. It is not enough for the ROKG to be swayed by North Korea's stubbornness or some ROK officials' mistaken arguments.

FULL PSI PARTICIPATION SIGNALS END TO "SUNSHINE POLICY"
(Segye Ilbo, April 16, 2009, Page 31)

The ROKG will soon make the announcement of its full-time membership in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) official. Although expected, this is an appropriate measure. Our view on weapons of mass destruction (WMD) has now been clearly revealed. Our perception that international relations come before inter-Korean ties has also been confirmed. In a sense, the ROK's decision has put a full stop to the "Sunshine and Engagement Policies" of the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun Administrations, respectively.

The ROK's participation in the PSI carries various meanings. The ROK delayed joining the PSI until now because it was mindful of the North. To avoid "provoking the North" at all cost, the ROKG even overrode the international community's universal rules. Yet again, North Korea's threat to construe the ROK's (full) participation in the PSI as a declaration of war could have forced the ROK to back off. However, the ROKG overcame this inclination. The ROKG has become more mature. Inter-Korean relations are surely important, but the ROKG should not repeatedly succumb to North Korea's outdated brinkmanship tactics.

Peace and unification of the Korean Peninsula will unlikely be achieved without cooperation from the international community, as seen in the unification of East and West Germany. The ROK's full participation in the PSI could be a starting point in this shift in understanding. If the ROK ignores efforts by 94 nations to prevent the spread of WMDs, it may backfire on the ROK and those nations may turn their back on peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula. It is appropriate that North Korea's series of threats to peace, such as the nuclear and missile provocations in 2006 and the recent

SEOUL 00000626 004 OF 004

long-range rocket launch, should be condemned as such. We cannot always use the uniqueness of inter-Korean relations as an excuse. If North Korea takes the extreme step of shutting down the Kaesong Industrial Complex, we must deal with it accordingly.

However, while adhering to the principles of the PSI, we also need to take a flexible attitude. This is not because we are afraid of North Korea's bluster or that North Korea, Iran and Syria are designated as WMD proliferators, but because the North is a direct party to the state of peace on the Korean Peninsula. However, we do not need to apply the PSI to every matter, such as those that can be resolved within the framework of the South-North Agreement on Maritime Transportation, for example.

STEPHENS